

REMARKS

Claims 1-13 remain in this application, of which Claims 1, 6-8, 12 and 13 are independent. Claims 1 and 6-13 have been amended to define still more clearly what Applicant regards as his invention, in terms which distinguish over the art of record. These changes have been made solely to clarify the claim language and to address a formal rejection, and are neither intended nor believed to narrow the scope of any claim element. Thus, this Amendment is to be viewed as a traversal of the prior-art rejection.

The abstract has been amended as to matters of form.

Claims 6 and 8-13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Those claims have been carefully reviewed and amended as deemed necessary to ensure that they conform fully to the requirements of Section 112, second paragraph, with special attention to the points raised in the Office Action. It is believed that the rejection under Section 112, second paragraph, has been obviated, and its withdrawal is therefore respectfully requested.

Claims 1-5 and 7-13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 6,738,151 B1 (Kato), and Claim 6 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious from that patent in view of U.S. Patent 5,642,208 (Takahashi et al.).

As is described in detail in the specification, the present invention relates to printing in which a print job is processed in parallel by a plurality of output apparatus. Such processing is useful, for example, in the case of producing a large number of copies.

Independent Claim 1 is directed to an image processing method for processing an input job in parallel by a plurality of color image output apparatus. The method of Claim 1 comprises a developing step, of developing input image data into bit map image data. That developing step includes first and second modes. In the first mode the input image data is developed a number of times equal to the number of color image output apparatus, using a color processing condition corresponding to each of the plurality of color image output apparatus, and in the second mode, the input image data is developed using an optional color processing condition and outputs a result obtained in the developing step to the plurality of color image output apparatus. This arrangement makes it possible to obtain optimum development with regard to each of the image output apparatus.

Kato relates to a system that uses distributed processing to handle a multi-page print job in such a way as to allow the job to be divided between two or more printers 10a ... 10n (see Fig. 17), at least one of which is a color printer (col. 14, lines 31-42). The distributed processing server 3 of the *Kato* system can ensure that for high quality color reproduction, those pages including photographs (for example) can be printed by the printer having the widest range of color production, while other color pages are sent to a printer with a lower capability in that regard. The *Kato* system provides two color modes of different image quality, the “tandem print/image quality small difference” mode and the “tandem print/high picture quality” mode. Nonetheless, Applicant submits that the developing process in the *Kato* system appears to be performed only once by the printer controller 104 , and Applicant submits that that does not teach or suggest the first mode

recited in Claim 1, in which mode “the input image data is developed a number of times equal to the number of color image output apparatus, using a color processing condition corresponding to each of the plurality of color image output apparatus”. Without this feature, however, one does not obtain the benefit of the method of Claim 1, that is, to obtain the optimum development with respect to each of the plural image output apparatus. For at least this reason, it is believed to be clear that Claim 1 is allowable over *Kato*.

Independent Claim 8 is directed to an image processing method for processing an input job in parallel by a plurality of color-image output apparatus. The method of Claim 8 comprises a developing step, of developing input image data into bit map image data for a first color-image output apparatus, and a converting step, of converting the bit map image data for the first color-image output apparatus into bit map image data for a second color-image output apparatus. According to Claim 8, the bit map image data for the first color-image output apparatus developed in the developing step is transferred to the first color-image output apparatus, and the bit map image data for the second color-image output apparatus converted in the converting step is transferred to the second color-image output apparatus.

Applicant notes that in the *Kato* system, a judgment is made for each page, as to whether that page is a color page or a black and white page. Based on this judgment, a given page is developed into a color image if the judgment is that the page is a color page, or instead, into a black and white image, if the judgment is that the page is not a color page. That is not seen to teach, or even to hint at, the feature recited in Claim 1 of converting bit

map image data for a first color-image output apparatus into bit map image data for a second color-image output apparatus. For at least that reason, it is believed clear that Claim 8 is allowable over *Kato*.

Independent Claims 6, 7, 12 and 13 are each an apparatus or a storage-medium claim respectively corresponding to method Claim 1 or 8, and are believed to be patentable over *Kato* for at least the same reasons as discussed above in connection with the latter claims, respectively.

A review of the other art of record, including *Takahashi '208*, has failed to reveal anything which, in Applicant's opinion, would remedy the deficiencies of the art discussed above, as references against the independent claims herein. Those claims are therefore believed patentable over the art of record.

The other claims in this application are each dependent from one or another of the independent claims discussed above and are therefore believed patentable for the same reasons. Since each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual reconsideration of the patentability of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully requests favorable reconsideration and early passage to issue of the present application.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our New York office by telephone at (212) 218-2100. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L.P. Diana', written over a horizontal line.

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